Players may have aspirations for their characters immediately in some cases, but even if not, eventually the city will impinge on their lives, and they're going to have to step outside of their daily routines to accomplish things. The rules below detail how these things are accomplished using Energy.

Energy

Energy is a generic term that represents any of a number of different things. Physical resources such as food or materials are part of this, as is money, as a representation of credit for such things. But it also represents effort and work, as well as magical energy. For simplicity we don't keep track of various types of energy, as they are all considered interchangeable for the purposes of these rules.

Energy Availability

Net energy is available each day. Energy not used is “lost,” though we imagine that the character expends it on things unimportant to the plot of play. Energy is gained at various points during the day, but is abstracted.

Energy Loss

A character's full net energy may not be available for any of several different reasons. One is lack of proximity to the sources of their energy. If they are in a cell somewhere, they may well not have any of their usual sources of energy, for instance (instead relying on the jail food to keep them from going to negative energy). Also going into energy debt, (negative net energy for the day), will have repercussions for the following day.

Energy Debt

If a character should ever go to negative energy for a day, then this energy debt has to be repaid the next day, at double the cost, before anything else is done that day.

Note that if a character ever accumulates an energy debt so high that they will not be able to pay it off the following day, the character immediately dies as some result of the loss that created the debt. Players doing this intentionally must describe their last efforts in such a way as to explain how the character would die. More often such debts are incurred by outside sources, and the GM will decide how this leads to death. Violence is the usual method, but many others are possible.

Investing Energy

Investing is essentially storing energy away for a later expenditure. The nature of the investment has to be either general or specific. General investment is very inefficient, but allows flexibility. Specific investments dedicate energy to a single project, but are far more efficient.

General Investment

General investments represent such actions as resting, or recreating in such a way as the character has a little of the energy involved available at a later date. For every 5 energy so invested, the character has 1 more energy the next day. These energy decay at a rate of 1 per day, or 5%, whichever is more.

Specific Investment

Specific investments represent long-term projects that a character simply can't finish in one day. For instance, a campaign to get elected would be a specific investment. For every 5 energy invested, 4 is added to the pool for this specific project. These decay at the rate of 1 per day, or 5%, whichever is more. If a character cancels a project, they may recoup 1 energy for every full 10 invested, which then count as though they had been generally invested (can be used for anything).

Specific investments should be tracked in separate pools for each project.

Task Energy Cost

Each task has a cost to accomplish. This cost is set by the GM, but often has a somewhat set value if it is one of the particular types below. The GM should adjust these values based on their ideas about the situation at hand to reflect additional difficulties or help. This adjustment is, in part, to keep the player guessing at the cost level, so they may occasionally fail (though they can attempt to find out the cost, see Knowing the Cost below).

Altering Energy Inputs and Outputs

It costs about 20 energy to adjust an input or output by 1.

Contesting

Things are difficult enough to accomplish without a character having to face opposition. But often they do. Very simply, when facing opposition, the task energy cost is increased by the energy expenditure (including ability), of the opposition. In many cases opposition is direct, in which case the opposition's total commitment becomes the task energy cost.

Attacking Energy

Violence is one simple example of a contest to attack energy, but there are many other things this can represent. The side investing more energy may then deduct as many energy as they like from their opponent, so long as this does not kill them (see Energy Debt above).

Killing

A character who is at negative energy, who cannot spend more to defend themselves because to do so would cause their death, may be killed. This act is contested with a base energy cost of 40.

Knowing the Cost

The player never automatically knows the exact cost of any task, but may well have a good idea based on what tasks typically cost. A player can have their character attempt to discover the precise energy level, if the player so chooses. This is yet another task, which occurs before the resolution, with an energy cost set by the GM. This should be around 20% less than the total energy cost that's being determined. So it may well cost a player energy to know the energy cost in question.

Knowing Contested Costs

Note that in the case of a contested action, the opposition may spend energy to obfuscate their investment, over and above the value suggested above. A side managing to determine the energy cost, if successful, determines the total commitment. Not the individual elements involved. If the player wishes to have their character determine how much of this is ability, and how much is energy, they must succeed at yet another attempt with a similar cost, which the opponent may also spend energy upon to obfuscate.

Character Commitment

Energy Commitment

The player commits an amount of energy that they're willing to expend on the task at hand. This can be up to as much as they have available for the day plus any stored away through general investment, plus any energy specifically invested towards this goal.

Ability Selection

The GM selects the pertinent ability and it's rating is added to the energy commitment to get the total character commitment to the task.

Success Detemination

If the total character commitment is equal to, or greater than the task energy cost, the character accomplishes the task in question.

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